



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



PRESS RELEASE

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**DHR CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT
NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK TO HONOR LANDMARK
LEGISLATION**

Baltimore: April 26 marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to focus on victims of crime and celebrate our nation's progress in serving them. This year's theme, "25 Years of Rebuilding Lives: Celebrating the Victims of Crime Act" honors a landmark national commitment to victims of crime.

In 1984, Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which created the Crime Victims Fund, financed not by taxpayers but by fines and penalties paid by offenders. In 25 years, the Fund has grown from \$68 million to more than \$2 billion and is disbursed throughout the nation in amounts determined by Congress every year. In Maryland, the Department of Human Resources distributes these funds to community organizations throughout the state.

The Fund supports victim compensation programs, which reimburse victims for many out-of-pocket expenses—such as medical care, counseling, funerals, and lost wages—that victims face in the aftermath of crime. It also helps fund victim assistance programs—such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs—that support victims by providing physical and emotional care and guidance in navigating the criminal justice system. In Maryland, VOCA-Victim Assistance Program funds supported more than 70 public and nonprofit agencies serving almost 41,500 victims.

The U.S. Department of Justice opened National Crime Victims' Rights Week with its annual national Candlelight Observance Ceremony on April 23, 2009, and its' National Crime Victims' Service Award Ceremony on April 24, 2009, both held in Washington, DC, to honor extraordinary individuals and programs that serve victims of crime. Local events will include: Memorial services and other programs acknowledging and celebrating the work of victim advocates.

- Martin O'Malley, Governor
- Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
- Brenda Donald, Secretary

The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.